ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE 20

NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE
26 May 1985

TAKING CHARGE

The Rising Power Of National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane

By Leslie H. Gelb

IN THE BIG CORNER ROOM WHERE Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski once held sway, a few doors down from the Oval Office, Robert C. McFarlane sits on a couch talking about his rise to the post of national security adviser. The 47-year-old former marine sits quietly, hands in his lap, his speech slow and deliberate. Back in October 1983, McFarlane says, he was the "compromise choice." No one saw him "as a threat."

Most Presidents have chosen strong-willed, independent-minded outsiders for the job. When Ronald Reagan picked McFarlane, it seemed this would be an exception. McFarlane was an insider to the core: loyal, efficient, knowledgeable, discreet. The Secretaries of State and Defense could rest easy with this perennial No. 2 man.

But it hasn't turned out that way. Within the last few months, McFarlane has suddenly emerged as a powerhouse in the formulation of Administration foreign and defense policy, sometimes rivaling and sometimes overruling Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger. And his influence is growing — inside and outside the Administration.

One sign of that dramatic change came in March when McFarlane was moved out of the basement office occupied by his two immediate predecessors, Richard V. Allen and William P. Clark, and moved into the large office close by the President. The message of his being newly anointed was further spread within the Administration when he and his wife, Jonda, were invited to private dinners with the President and Nancy Reagan in the White House dining room.

Inside power feeds outside power, and vice versa. In recent months, Robert (Bud) McFarlane has ended his careerlong isolation from the public. Where once he talked with the press anonymously, identified simply as "a senior Adminstration official," today he briefs reporters in full view of the television cameras. He has begun making the rounds of the Sunday television talk shows.

McFarlane's willingness to be interviewed on the record for this article is itself an unprecedented move that reflects his new power. As a longtime McFarlane friend puts it: "Bud would never dream of doing this without the complete backing of the President." And the national security adviser's candor during the interview was also extraordinary.

He spoke, for example, of the failure of American policy in Lebanon last year and how one possible approach — linking military force and diplomacy — had to be ruled out because the "hostility" between the State and Defense Departments made "agile diplomacy" impossible. He also revealed the White House diplomatic agenda, as the President viewed it in 1983, as well as unknown details of how foreign-policy decisions are now shaped in this Administration. According to White House aides, that process includes a little-known band of top officials, called the "Family Group," that is dedicated to smoothing over internal tensions.

The evidence of McFarlane's new clout is everywhere:

■ According to White House officials, when he feels he knows the President's mind on an issue, he often signs decision memorandums "Robert C. McFarlane for the President" without even showing the memos to the President. Recently, the State Department wanted to allow Guatemala $75 million in commodity credits, but the Treasury Department opposed the move unless Guatemala first put its finances in order. McFarlane issued a decision memo, on his own, providing a total of $50 million in credits in two installments. "This happens often," says an aide. "That's real power."

■ In March, before the American delegation left for the arms-control talks in Geneva, McFarlane called a meeting of the National Security Council. Officials say the meeting ran for about an hour, and that McFarlane took up most of that time showing charts and outlining six options for the United States position at the talks. After the session, he and his aides drafted a 14-page decision memorandum, and President Reagan signed it without change.

■ Earlier this year, McFarlane knocked heads with Shultz and Weinberger when they pushed hard for immediate and massive arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Jordan. According to an aide, McFarlane told them: "We've got lots of fights on the Hill first — the MX missile, aid to the contras, arms control, the defense budget — and the Middle East is fifth." McFarlane proposed instead a general review of Middle East policy as a cover for the delay, and the two Secretaries agreed. The aide says McFarlane told them: "If the Arabs complain, lay it off on me, say the White House wants the review."

McFarlane's ascendance comes at a time when, according to the national security adviser and other Administration officials, President Reagan now believes that his military buildup and the economic recovery, coupled with a rash of Soviet political and economic problems, have provided an opportunity for some diplomatic initiatives — with the Soviet Union and around the world. "We have been building the leverage," McFarlane says, "and now is the time to build more and use it."

The national security adviser brings years of foreign-policy experience to the task; he is far more

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knowledgeable in the area than any of the President's other top aides. But if the President's talk of diplomatic initiatives is to amount to anything, McFarlane will have to control two divisive elements of the last four years:

First, the feuding between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger that has made for considerable disarray in the policy process.

Second, the tendency — though somewhat muted over the last year — toward inflammatory anti-Communist rhetoric, which could severely hamper negotiations with the Russians. During President Reagan's recent trip to Western Europe, for example, McFarlane himself rewrote a major Presidential speech, provided by the White House communications director Patrick J. Buchanan, to soften its anti-Soviet tone.

McFarlane, who served two years on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has also been given the job of finding some compromise with Congress over aid to the Nicaraguan contras. Says Representative Les Aspin, Democrat of Wisconsin and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee: "There's only one man from the Administration anyone up here thinks about when it comes to arms control or Central America, and that's McFarlane."

Over the last two decades, Administrations have seldom been able to devise and implement a cohesive foreign policy without the services of a wise, skillful and powerful national security adviser. Whether Bud McFarlane has the personal and intellectual qualities and Presidential backing that made Kissinger and Brzezinski such crucial figures remains to be seen.

McFarlane's abilities, says William G. Hyland, editor of Foreign Affairs magazine, are "about to be tested as he works his way through the internal and external mine fields." One explosive threat: His emphasis on diplomacy could make him a prime target for conservatives within and outside the Administration.

But beyond such concerns looms a larger question. During President Reagan's first term, his Administration was committed to a strong anti-Communist position with little or no willingness to seek diplomatic compromises with the Soviet Union and other adversaries. Interviews with McFarlane and dozens of high Government officials reveal no indications of a basic change of heart.

The President's European tour — with its stop at the military cemetery in Bitburg (which, according to McFarlane's aides, he opposed) and the loudly voiced criticisms of Administration policies at the economic summit — suggests some of the problems in the path of any diplomatic breakthroughs. For all his growing power, it's not clear whether McFarlane has the will and the skill to clear that path.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, WHEN JONDA RILEY first met Bud McFarlane, she liked him right away, she says, and she plotted — successfully — to get him to ask her to a senior prom. "He had direction, commitment," she recalls, "and it was fascinating to meet a man I had to work to get to know."

According to those who work with him and those who try to write about him, he is still that way — almost sphinxlike, opaque, his soft eyes fixed on the other person, his words and gestures under total control. Only occasionally does he come up with a wisecrack or a humorous tale. His colleagues tell of a 1982 White House meeting called to find a new and appealing name for the MX missile. When someone suggested "Peacemaker," which was the name finally selected, McFarlane is said to have countered, "I suppose Widowmaker wouldn't do?"

One of his favorite stories dates back to the 1970's, when McFarlane was an aide to national security adviser Henry Kissinger. One day, McFarlane says, Kissinger suffered through yet another unsuccessful attempt to convince the Joint Chiefs of Staff that they should accept new concessions to the Russians on strategic arms. Kissinger came storming back to his office, screamed, threw papers around and finally turned toward his aide. McFarlane repeats his former boss's words in a deep Germanic baritone: "Bud, I will visit my marines because they alone among all the services have never made any pretense at intelligence." Then McFarlane adds: "Just to prove he was right, at the time I thought that was a compliment."

McFarlane was born in 1937 in Washington where his father, William Doddridge McFarlane, was a Democratic Congressman from the 13th Congressional District of Texas from 1932 to 1938 — a New Dealer who like many New Dealers became increasingly conservative over the years. Graham, Tex., was the family's hometown, and young Bud grew up with what was, by most accounts, his father's basic persona: polite, self-effacing, deferential to his elders.

Today, the national security adviser's staff quotes his working credo as: "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." McFarlane's humility has sometimes extended to stunning expressions of inadequacy. Friends recall his saying, when he took his present post, "This job is way beyond me. They should have gotten somebody better, like Kissinger." Recently, though, his aides say, such comments have not been heard.

McFarlane was graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1958 with a major in electrical engineering, and joined the Marines. Over the next years he served in Japan and Korea and he led his artillery battery ashore in Danang in 1965 — it was the first American combat unit in Vietnam.

McFarlane studied international relations at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, and in 1971 he was named a White House fellow in the Nixon Administration. Then came his stint with Kissinger, and when Lieut. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, the deputy adviser, succeeded Kissinger, McFarlane stayed on. These were the years when Bud McFarlane built his reputation, brick by brick, as a loyal, efficient staff man — the start of a political and foreign-policy network of mentors and admirers that would later stand him in such good stead.

When Jimmy Carter came in, McFarlane landed at the National Defense University, and in 1979, by this time a lieutenant colonel, McFarlane resigned from the Marine Corps.

McFarlane's long years in the military had deepened his already fierce patriotism and his sense of service. He also, according to friends and colleagues, had learned how to be tough, even stiff-

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necked, when he felt the occasion demanded. They tell of a dinner in Honduras late last year hosted by top Honduran generals and officials. As one aide tells it: "They started to give Bud a hard time, saying that we had not done enough for them, that they needed written commitments and a mutual defense treaty. When dessert came, McFarlane responded that our military exercises, aid, and the President's word were commitments, and if the President's word wasn't good enough, 'I don't know what I can do for you.' " At which point McFarlane stood up and walked out. "They were stunned," the aide says, "but they also stopped pressing us for a treaty."

After resigning from the corps, McFarlane spent two years on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee, where his mentor was Senator John Tower. Then Ronald Reagan's election lit a fire under McFarlane's career. He was tapped by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. to become the Department's counselor. A year later, when William P. Clark left the State Department and took over as national security adviser, he brought McFarlane along as his deputy.

Bud McFarlane has his critics, who claim that he is wooden, unimaginative, not much of a conceptual thinker, but even they hasten to add that he is solid and steady and that, under his direction, the National Security Council staff — often criticized in the past for its incompetence and ideological rigidity — now runs a much more professional operation. His aides claim that McFarlane's low-key, nonconfrontational style has its advantages.

"At meetings, he is a listener, talks less than anyone else," says one colleague. "With Shultz and Weinberger, he'll ask a lot of questions based on the facts he knows and they don't, and that backs them off."

Within the bureaucracy, McFarlane can also be a calculating infighter. He has been known to have startlingly indiscreet conversations with legislators and journalists when it suits his purpose, sometimes to distance himself from certain positions taken within the Administration.

Today, it is clear that McFarlane wants to be much more than the consummate bureaucrat. Given his growing power, he seems to have a new vision of what he can be, perhaps a mixture of two of his predecessors. He speaks reverently of Brent Scowcroft, the tactful, skillful behind-the-scenes operator. But he also yearns to be seen as the brilliant strategic thinker, in the tradition of Henry Kissinger.

UNLIKE A KISSINGER OR A BRZEZINSKI, McFarlane has written little that reveals his thinking about major foreign-policy issues. But Lawrence S. Eagleburger — a former Under Secretary of State who worked closely with McFarlane and is now the president of Kissinger Associates, a foreign-policy consulting firm — captures the general view when he quips: "Bud has a very conservative outlook, but he lets pragmatism get the better of him."

Perhaps the most revealing the national security adviser has ever been on the record was in the course of an interview for this article. His analysis of why American policy in Lebanon failed last year, for example, is remarkably candid. It also illustrates Eagleburger's point, showing McFarlane as a hard-liner who is, ultimately, a realist.

"In Lebanon — and I, it's still a very painful experience and I may have just been flat wrong — this Government in February of 1984 was sharply divided over political-military strategy, and there were two courses that I could recommend. A course that could have preserved United States interests in Lebanon, but at great cost, would have been to go to war with Syria. Or, we could disengage there.

"But the third option, theoretically possible, of the careful bringing to bear, the selective use of force here and there in support of an agile diplomacy, simply wasn't in the cards. We didn't have that kind of responsiveness between State and Defense that could have facilitated that kind of diplomacy.

"So I recommended to the President that, since we could not go to war with Syria, that we ought to get out of there. I did feel that there was a way we could have gotten out that would have preserved our interests, and I still think that, had it not been for the total collapse of Lebanon's Army, that we could have.

"But it did collapse and I think I should have recognized the inevitability of that collapse perhaps earlier on.

"I suppose one can say that I split the difference in my policy recommendation" — between Shultz, who wanted to use force, and Weinberger, who wanted to get out. "It was a judgment of the reality of the condition of our Government at that time — that there was such hostility between the key actors that you couldn't expect to sustain an effective military strategy."

In the end, McFarlane is saying, he took the Weinberger line. But clearly, his instinct was closer to that reflected in recent speeches by Shultz — the use of military force in the service of diplomacy. It was reminiscent, as well, of Henry Kissinger's classical balance-of-power approach to diplomacy. "That's exactly how Bud thinks," says a member of the National Security Council staff.

In a little-noticed speech in March, McFarlane called for "a proportional military response against bona fide military targets in a state which directs terrorist actions against us." Nor, he continued, "should we need to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that a particular element or individual in that state is responsible for such terrorist acts." Once again, the position is close to that of Shultz and goes much beyond that of Weinberger.

Yet, according to Administration officials, when it comes to Central America, McFarlane's reasoning is much like the Pentagon's and often in conflict with the State Department's. There is Administration-wide agreement on helping the contras and bringing pressure of various kinds on the Nicaraguan Government. But unlike Shultz, the national security adviser opposes direct negotiations with Managua — both because he doesn't trust the Sandinistas and because such moves create great anxiety among America's allies in the region. McFarlane also has greater confidence than Shultz in the growth of contra strength.

McFarlane's analysis of Soviet-American rela-

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tions grows out of the overall military balance between the nations. He considers the Soviet leadership highly cautious in general, but once Russia attained military parity, McFarlane argued in a speech last year, it began testing the West — aiding Marxists in Angola and Ethiopia, for example. "Absent an apparent coordinated Western opposition," he went on, the Russians "were encouraged to use their own forces in Afghanistan." Still, as McFarlane indicated in another speech last year, he believes that, though Moscow is clearly "expansionist," both countries "share a fundamental interest in avoiding nuclear conflict and in reducing tension."

Says an old friend and colleague: "There's nothing fancy in his thinking. He's not an ideological fanatic, but he knows what he wants." The goal: a stronger America more willing to exercise its military and diplomatic power. Yet, as McFarlane is quick to acknowledge, what he wants is circumscribed by what he can get within the Administration.

THE PREVAILING VIEW IN THE ADMINISTRATION is that Bud McFarlane has more power to achieve his ends than did his immediate predecessors. Richard Allen had some background in foreign policy but little personal clout in the White House. William Clark had a close personal relationship with the President but little foreign-policy experience. McFarlane has both the knowledge and an ever-closer relationship with the President.

Of course, the national security adviser has been a potential powerhouse since the position was first created. Modern Presidents have increasingly demanded quick responses to their political and policy needs — responses that were not always readily forthcoming from such large and entrenched institutions as the Departments of State and Defense, each with its own interests and perspectives.

As McFarlane sees it, this is how foreign policy is now formulated and where he fits into the process:

"Well, the President has a clear sense of a goal . . . . He says, 'Go figure out a way to do that.'. . . So, we'll have an N.S.C. meeting or two, usually preceded by work" done under the guidance of Assistant Secretaries of State. "We get up a paper and we send the paper to him and he digests that and then we have a couple of morning oral briefings." These briefings of the President, which last about 15 minutes each, are in preparation for the formal National Security Council meeting.

Then, at the council session, the President "listens to what his Cabinet officers have to say for the purpose — not for shaping the strategy, but for hearing his Cabinet officers. And then the next day I'll go back to his office and say, 'What did you think about that?' And he says, 'Well, thus and so, and I tend to believe *he's* right and *he's* wrong, but give me a couple of options on this so I can think about it some more.'

"That's usually a pretty short phase, sometimes 24 hours or less. Then, I come back to him and say, 'Well, here's what you can do and here's another way.'

"And he signs the directive," the formal decision that is then passed along through the bureaucracy to be implemented. In effect, the directive says: "The strategy will be thus and so. Here are your fallback options, and here's who I want to be in charge of it, and here are some milestones."

The decision-making process described by McFarlane is a dramatic deviation from most past Administrations. The devotion to a formal, Cabinet-style system is remarkable. According to White House aides, the President has participated in about 225 National Security Council meetings in a little more than four years. Nixon, in more than five years, attended only 86 meetings; Ford attended 39 in two years; Carter, 41 in four years.

What emerges from the Reagan Administration's N.S.C. meetings are consensus decisions, unusually broad policy directives stitched together by McFarlane that manage to incorporate the various views around the table. These decisions are then passed along to the lower echelons of the Departments of State and Defense

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for implementation.

But the broader the policy, the more room it allows for different interpretations. In the current Administration, that has meant a flow of power out of the White House and into the hands of aides in the Pentagon and the State Department. In the process of implementing policy, they are making it. "There has never been a better time to be an Assistant Secretary," says one longtime member of the N.S.C. staff. "They have enormous running room."

In past Administrations, the President and his chief foreign-policy advisers had the foreign-policy expertise to make focused decisions and issue concrete marching orders. Under Nixon, for example, the President, Kissinger and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird were all experienced in foreign-policy matters.

The Reagan Cabinet-style system has often led to stalemate. When there are internal disagreements over such major issues as arms control or Central American policy, Assistant Secretaries cannot resolve them; they lack the power to knock heads and make deals. For more than four years, for example, the Administration — caught in the feuding between Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard R. Burt and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy Richard N. Perle — has had no clear arms-control policy.

In recent months, however, an informal network has developed to fill in some of the cracks and crevices of the Cabinet-style system. According to a number of White House and Administration officials, the genesis of the change was a little-known exchange between President Reagan and Shultz after the election. The Secretary of State indicated he wasn't sure he could continue to work with Secretary of Defense Weinberger and C.I.A. chief William J. Casey. The President met with the three men and McFarlane, and eventually the four aides agreed to stay on in the Administration and to work at overcoming their differences.

Since then, Shultz, Weinberger, Casey and McFarlane have held a number of private sessions (they call themselves "The Family Group"), and this has, in turn, helped clear the air at the regular Wednesday breakfast meetings attended by Weinberger, Shultz and McFarlane. Officials say that these informal sessions have often been more important than the National Security Council meetings as a mechanism for resolving problems and making decisions.

In this informal network, three alliances have become pivotal.

Shultz and the President: The Secretary of State, over all, remains the most powerful of the foreign-policy advisers. He is a respected elder statesman, with broad experience in economic matters.

Shultz and McFarlane: According to their aides, the national security adviser and the Secretary of State agree about 80 percent of the time. But, as a high State Department official says, "We no longer assume agreement, and we no longer can count on Shultz beating Bud the way we used to."

McFarlane and the President: The President's confidence in his national security adviser is said to be based on the sense that "Bud is straightforward and not tricky," as one official puts it. Another says, "Bud's advice has kept him and gotten him out of trouble."

McFarlane's access to President Reagan is virtually unmatched — three or four meetings each day with the President, often alone. "This gives Bud enormous potential power, mostly because the President is not terribly critical or demanding and mostly accepts what Bud recommends," says a former senior official who knows that relationship well. "But Bud doesn't abuse this."

Except for Shultz, McFarlane seems to have outdistanced the competition. By all accounts, Caspar Weinberger's personal connection to the President continues strong, but his power has waned.

What's more, McFarlane has little competition within the White House itself. The powerful political troika that ruled the White House in President Reagan's first term — chief of staff James A. Baker 3d, his deputy Michael K. Deaver, and counselor Edwin Meese 3d — has been broken up. And Donald Regan, the new chief of staff, has given McFarlane his head.

As the power of national security advisers has grown over the years, so has the competition with the Secretary of State. Notorious battles have been fought by Kissinger and William P. Rogers, Brzezinski and Cyrus R. Vance, Allen and Haig. Today, the relationship is more harmonious than at any time in the last decade, with the exception of the brief period when Scowcroft was the adviser and Kissinger was Secretary of State.

The Shultz-McFarlane axis now has the power to dominate inside the Administration. When they agree, most officials say, they are strong enough to overcome any opposition — including that of the right wing of the Republican Party.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, Bud McFarlane sent President Reagan a memorandum suggesting that it was time for the Administration to get moving on the diplomatic front. On Thanksgiving Day, the national security adviser met with the President. According to McFarlane, this is what the President had to say:

"We have reversed the decline of our strength and restored that foundation, or begun to. For the first term, I think that's probably as much as we can hope to achieve. . . . We are going into an election year, a bad time to forge sensible policy.

"I think we ought to spend next year" — 1984 — "at least for the first half of it, focusing upon preventing catastrophe in the debt situation and adding another year of authorization and appropriations in the defense modernizations. And beyond that, in about mid-year" — 1985 — "you ought to start in earnest . . . on where we want to go."

McFarlane's time has now arrived, and he and his aides say that a plan and a strategy are ready. It looks like this:

Move soon before the President's political clout lessens in the closing years of his term. Push for the economic revitalization of Western Europe. Maintain a healthy economy while continuing to build military strength. Try to improve relations with Moscow, but don't give away too much. Provide more help to our friends around the world while trying to wean Soviet friends away from Moscow.

Over the last two years, McFarlane and other top Administration officials have been urging that American policy should focus more on Asia, but that is changing. McFarlane's aides say that the Administration now intends to avoid any further drift of economic and strategic priorities toward the Far East by concentrating on the economic and military concerns of Western Europe. This, the officials say, was an important underlying premise of President Reagan's approach at the recent economic summit in Bonn.

The Administration holds that if the Soviet Union wants real diplomatic

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change, it will have to take the first steps — and maybe the second. Given Moscow's internal economic problems and the drain of the war in Afghanistan, the Administration believes, Russia needs agreements more than the United States. "We have to pay more attention to Soviet vulnerabilities," says a senior member of the National Security Council staff.

"What we're going to do," says the senior aide, "is create incentives for Soviet friends or clients to have a more balanced relationship with the West." Specifically, he and others say, there may be efforts to court nations such as India, Algeria, Mozambique and Angola.

This diplomatic largesse will not, however, include Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua. The Administration expects to increase military and economic pressures against them, and against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Echoing the views of many officials, a senior Administration aide comments: "Trying with Cuba isn't worth the problems it'll cause with the right wing here. And besides, with Cuba, Vietnam and the Sandinistas, you can't make agreements with them because they won't keep them."

As for the ongoing arms-control negotiations, McFarlane and his Administration colleagues continue to insist that the President is prepared to be "very flexible." But McFarlane and Weinberger give every indication of being true believers in the President's strategic defense intiative, also known as "Star Wars." And neither they nor outside experts feel there is much chance of a breakthrough with Moscow on offensive nuclear weapons unless limits are set on defense systems.

Administration officials offer winks and nods about a secret bargaining strategy. But among Administration experts, the betting is against a new nuclear-arms pact. They do, however, anticipate an overall reduction in Soviet-American tensions because, they feel, neither Washington nor Moscow would benefit from confrontations. They seem almost unconcerned about how Moscow will react to being pressured across the board on Star Wars, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The diplomatic picture is similarly bleak as concerns the Middle East, notwithstanding Shultz's foray there this month. The Administration's apparent game plan will be to encourage others — the Israelis, Egyptians and Jordanians — to raise the level of diplomatic activity while Washington stays in the background, waiting for conditions to ripen.

Behind all of the Administration voices lurks the melancholy notion that there may be no diplomatic solutions to most international problems. That may turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy because McFarlane and most of the other policy makers find it hard, in principle, to argue for compromises with most Communist leaders and because they believe that compromises in the past have often proved costly to the United States.

Yet, during the interview in his office, Bud McFarlane seemed reluctant to go where his own logic was taking him. "You can mind the store and maintain the status quo," he said, "or you can try to solve a couple of problems. And if you are going to do that, you have got to think ahead.

"Well, where is the President going to be spending his time in the first six months of this year? Is he going to be focusing on tax reforms or can he give his time to foreign policy? And if so, how am I going to use what time I get? . . . I mean how much time can he reasonably take? How much travel? And what ought to be the division of labor within the Government? What should the Secretary of State do, and what should the rest of us do?

"That is the toughest part." McFarlane paused a moment. "No," he went on, "it's not the toughest. It's the most frustrating." ■

Leslie H. Gelb is The Times's national security correspondent.